

From glowbugs@theporch.com Mon Sep 23 02:44:04 1996
Return-Path: <glowbugs@theporch.com>
Received: from uro (localhost.theporch.com [127.0.0.1]) by uro.theporch.com
(8.8.Beta.6/AUX-3.1.1) with SMTP id CAA20292; Mon, 23 Sep 1996 02:35:51 -0500
(CDT)
Date: Mon, 23 Sep 1996 02:35:51 -0500 (CDT)
Message-Id: <199609230735.CAA20292@uro.theporch.com>
Errors-To: ws4s@midtenn.net
Reply-To: glowbugs@theporch.com
Originator: glowbugs@theporch.com
Sender: glowbugs@theporch.com
Precedence: bulk
From: glowbugs@theporch.com
To: Multiple recipients of list <glowbugs@theporch.com>
Subject: GLOWBUGS digest 299
X-Listprocessor-Version: 6.0c -- ListProcessor by Anastasios Kotsikonas
X-Comment: Please send list server requests to listproc@theporch.com
Status: 0

GLOWBUGS Digest 299

Topics covered in this issue include:

- 1) Re: Crystal Set sadness
by joe@westonia.com (Joseph Cooper)
- 2) Happiness (was Crystal Set sadness)
by haynes@cats.ucsc.edu (Jim Haynes)

Date: Sun, 22 Sep 96 10:21 EDT
From: joe@westonia.com (Joseph Cooper)
To: glowbugs@theporch.com
Subject: Re: Crystal Set sadness
Message-ID: <m0v4pPX-000j9HC@gpu2.westonia.com>

>I was in Radio Shack the other day to buy some
>overpriced video cable...
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>A mother and son (who was perhaps seven) were looking
>over some of the project kits on the shelf. The kid
>asks, "what's a crystal radio?"

I had an even more disturbing experience along the same theme many years ago.

When I was about 12 I had the opportunity to work weekends in a small electronics/TV repair store (this was during the early 1960's). My task was to keep the place clean and do simple maintenance on the stock (e.g. do all

of the dull and boring stuff like sort out bulk resistors and caps into the proper bins - which is where you learn things like the colour codes and size values).

One of the items that was being sold was the 'classic' crystal radio shaped like a rocket ship. This was a simple but useful set that came complete with earphones, and due to its use of a loopstick antenna, you did not need to attach it to an outdoor antenna to be used. Its price at that time was \$2.00. I had had one myself at age 8 and had enjoyed listening to it in my bed before going to sleep. Many of the radio stations of the time were still producing the full feature radio (this was before 'rock and roll' radio came to establish the 'hit' concept) of the time, with drama, educational, and real radio personalities being offered. Frankly, it really was through that little crystal set that I got the 'radio bug'.

One day a young fellow of about 10 came in and bought one of the 'rocket ship' radios with his birthday money. He was really pleased with his purchase and was excited about taking it home and trying it out. A couple of hours later his father came into the store dragging his son by the arm and carrying the crystal set in his hand. 'Did you sell this junk to my son ! You should be put in jail for selling this !' he started to shout at the top of his lungs at the store owner. He ranted and raved. It was not about the crystal set itself, it was simply the selling of the radio in general. It had no value to him as a thing of utility. His son stood there completely shattered. Not only was his decision to buy the crystal set completely rejected, but he was humiliated by watching his father acting like a bully in public.

The owner of the store fortunately did not rise to the fellow's bait and simply gave him back his \$2.00 and deflected the attacks deftly. For myself, I knew I should keep my mouth shut, and wisely did, but I kept on thinking about all of the great experiences that I had had with the same crystal set. One of the things I was wishing was to be able to tell the other young fellow that he had made the right decision in getting the crystal set, but of course we never saw him again after that incident.

As an interesting aside on this incident. That 'rocket ship' crystal radio is now considered a 'classic' of 1950's nostalgia. A mint condition set in its original 'plastic bubble' box is worth about \$300 in the collectors market or more.

Certainly the incident was an extreme case, but connecting it to many things going on today, most people not experiencing the simple wonder of being able to pick up a radio station with a small number of unpowered electronic parts like they once did. What we have now is people who work with 'black boxes' that hold no meaning other than they are means to connecting to some type of medium (music, videos, talk radio, etc.) For most people the 'on' switch, the volume control and the channel selector is the most complicated bit of

machinery operation they will ever experience.

I still make crystal set and belong to the 'Xtal Set Society' where I share my experiences with about 500 other people and still get a kick out each project. I do not know what ever happened to that kid who did not get to use the crystal radio. Maybe he undertook to find out what he missed or maybe he simply ended up becomming like his father and is now spending his days lashing out at what ever he does not understand. That may be the real issue here. Maybe What makes 'us' different from 'the otheres' is that we do like to experiment with things in order to understand how they work, then enjoy the simple wonder of the fact that they do work. Its not a bad philosophy to live by, all said and done.

73's for now.

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Date: Sun, 22 Sep 1996 17:59:52 -0700
From: haynes@cats.ucsc.edu (Jim Haynes)
To: glowbugs@theporch.com
Subject: Happiness (was Crystal Set sadness)
Message-ID: <199609230059.RAA05374@hobbes.UCSC.EDU>

On the other hand, last week I was in Ham Radio Outlet and there were two boys, one about 12 and the other younger, with a mother and/or grandmother. I didn't see what he was buying, but he had a shoe box full of cash, which I heard one of the women say was his savings from the whole summer. And they left with something.

Then just a little later I was in a surplus joint, and a father and maybe 10 year old son were in there, and I guess the father was looking for something for some project, but I heard the son say this is a really neat store. And the father saying something like "you're weird just like your old man" And then they were in front of a shelf holding tubes, and the father was explaining tubes to the son. And at one point he was holding up a klystron, and told the boy that was the first tube to generate microwaves.

End of GLOWBUGS Digest 299
